

Finland in focus

TOWARDS 2020 IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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To the reader

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION and cooperation with the world of work have over the past decade become central components of the strive for excellence in Finnish vocational education and training (VET). Today this is especially highlighted by a globalised society that is increasingly skilled, competitive, and networked, as noted also in the strategies of the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture.

The Leonardo da Vinci programme has promoted international mobility, networking and high quality standards in international cooperation since 1995. In Finland during the past 15 years the programme has funded a total of 1500 development and mobility projects as well as 15 000 mobility periods for Finnish students and experts. Finland also annually receives a very high number of VET students and experts from all over Europe.

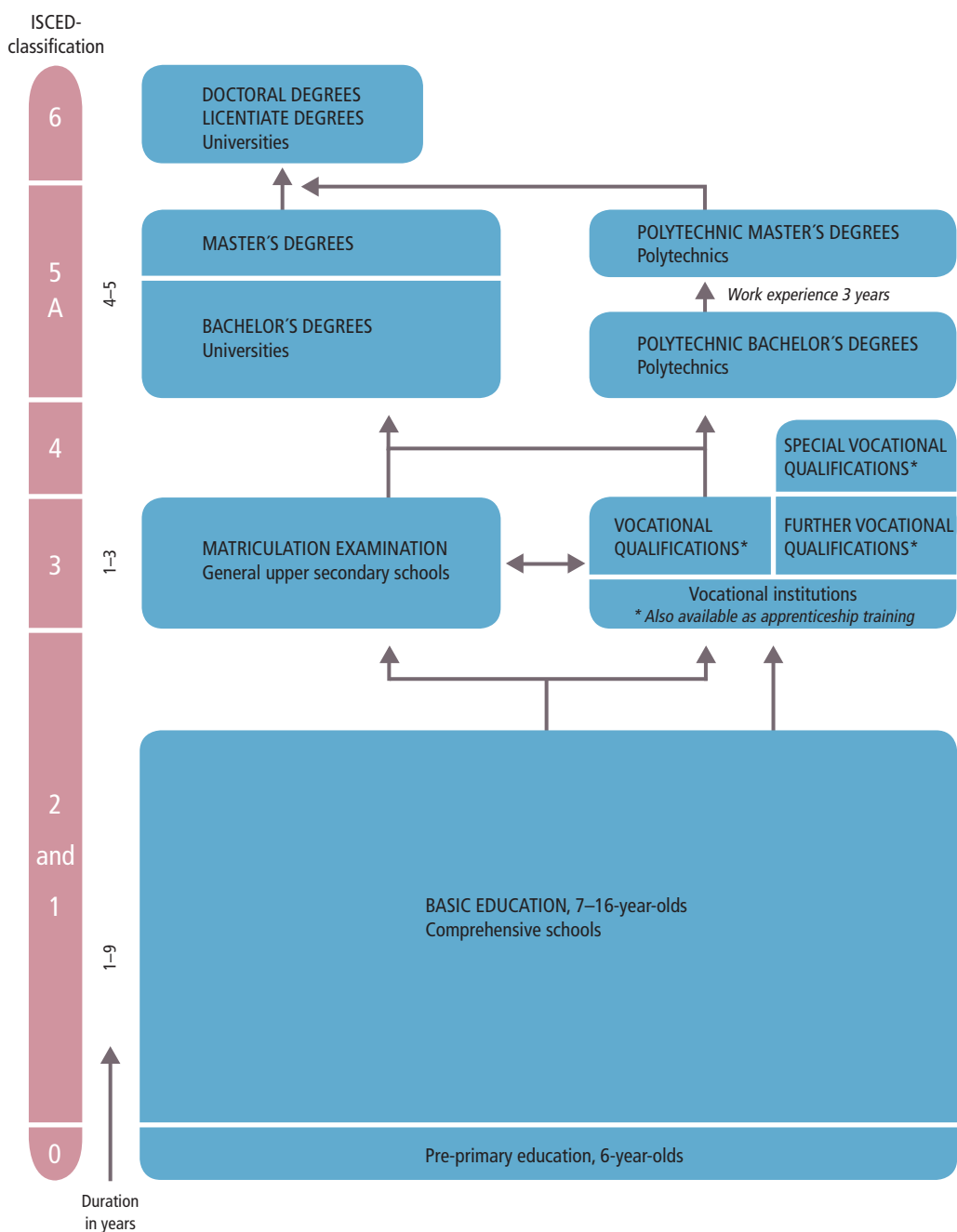
Vocational education and training is very popular among the young in today's Finland. Over 50% of applicants to secondary level studies choose VET as their first option. Vocational education also provides an international study option: according to recent statistics nearly 13% of Finnish students in VET are participating in mobility periods abroad. The Leonardo programme funds around 44% of these periods.

The current topics on the EU agenda support the strivings of the Finnish vocational education and training systems very well. Through the EU2020 objectives, the Copenhagen Process and the Bruges Communiqué important issues for the coming years are developed: increasing student mobility, promoting social cohesion and active citizenship, building the European Credit Transfer System for VET (ECVET), utilising the National and European Qualification Frameworks (EQF) and developing European approaches towards quality assurance.

This publication is intended for vocational teachers, experts and working life representatives with a specific interest in Finland. It introduces some of the EU level priorities and other current topics and development trends within the Finnish vocational education and training systems.

The Lifelong Learning Programme LLP and the Leonardo da Vinci programme will continue to provide a solid European framework for cooperation with Finnish training institutions and workplaces. We hope you will make the most of this opportunity together with your Finnish partners!

The Finnish education system



ISCED-classification 1997

0 Pre-primary education

1-2 Primary education or lower secondary education

3 Upper secondary education

4 Post-secondary non-tertiary education

5 First stage of tertiary education

6 Second stage of tertiary education

PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

Pre-primary education is intended for six-year-olds, who start their compulsory education in the following year. Participation in pre-school education is voluntary but municipalities are obliged to provide it. Almost all children aged 6 to 7 (99.2% in 2007) attend pre-primary education; about 70% of them also attend day care.

BASIC EDUCATION

Compulsory education starts in the year when a child has his/her seventh birthday, unless the child needs special needs education. Compulsory basic education lasts nine years, and nearly all children complete it in a comprehensive school. Basic education is free of charge.

UPPER SECONDARY GENERAL EDUCATION

Upper secondary schools provide general education for students who are usually from 16 to 19 years of age. Upper secondary school ends with the completion of the matriculation examination. This will yield eligibility for all forms of higher education.

UPPER SECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET)

Upper secondary vocational education and training builds on the basic education curriculum. To complete an upper secondary level vocational qualification after basic education normally takes 3 years (120 credits). The duration of studies is up to 40 credits shorter for those who have completed the general upper secondary school, as they are given credit for some of their studies there. A three-year vocational qualification provides general eligibility for higher education. For further details, see pages 8–11.





GENERAL EDUCATION FOR ADULTS

General adult education comprises general upper secondary education for adults and liberal adult education. General adult education responds to adults' self-development needs, offers learning opportunities catering for mature learners' own interests and preferences, and develops citizenship skills.

General upper secondary schools for adults are mainly intended for employed adults who wish to complete basic education or upper secondary general education curricula or parts of these. Upper secondary schools for adults are either independent institutions or they operate as separate units within institutions providing education for young people. They also offer the opportunity to complete the matriculation examination or to study individual subjects. It is also possible to improve grades in subjects completed earlier. There are upper secondary schools for adults in approximately 40 municipalities.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS

Vocational education and training for adults can be divided into upper secondary (initial) and further vocational education and training. The training may either lead into a certified qualification or be non-formal. Vocational

training in upper secondary schools leads into a certified qualification, whereas further vocational training may fall under either category.

A variety of measures are available to adults to maintain and enhance their competencies and to study for qualifications or parts of qualifications: in-service training; apprenticeship training; the competence test system; and labour market training (adult employment training).

HIGHER EDUCATION

After completing upper secondary education (general or vocational), students can apply for higher education. The Finnish higher education system has two parallel sectors: traditional universities and universities of applied sciences. The traditional universities concentrate on academic and scientific research and education, whereas universities of applied sciences are more oriented to the needs of business and industry.

Source: www.oph.fi/english/

Vocational education and training in Finland

THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE GRANTS THE AUTHORITY to provide vocational training. This authorisation determines the fields of study taught by a provider and the total number of students. Within the framework of their authorisation and qualification structure, training providers are free to target their training provision as they choose, to meet the needs of business and industry.

At present, there are about 150 VET providers. The provider network is being developed with a view to comprising sufficiently large and diversified institutions, capable of preparing students for the needs of business and industry. The education providers are mostly municipalities or federations of municipalities.

DRAFTING OF CURRICULA AT NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS

At national level, The Ministry of Education and Culture sets the general goals for vocational education and training, determines the structure of qualifications, and the core subjects. Besides, the Finnish National Board of Education decides the national requirements of qualifications, detailing the goals and core contents of each vocational qualification. In 2008-2010 the core curricula for the 52 qualifications in initial vocational education and training were reviewed. The curricula are compliant with the National Qualification framework (NQF) and the European Qualification Framework (EQF). At local level, the education providers draw up their own curricula based on the core curricula provided by the National Board of Education. Each student follows an individual study plan.

THE FORMS AND SECTORS OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Upper secondary vocational education and training is provided in vocational schools and in the form of apprenticeship training. In addition, a vocational qualification can be obtained through a so-called competence test administered by a qualification committee.



Vocational education and training is provided in the following sectors, comprising nearly all areas of the labour market:

- Humanities and Education
- Culture
- Social Sciences, Business and Administration
- Natural Sciences
- Technology, Communications and Transport
- Natural Resources and the Environment
- Social Services, Health and Sports
- Tourism, Catering and Domestic Services.

PRE-VOCATIONAL PROGRAMMES

Prior to starting education leading to an upper secondary vocational qualification, students may apply for the following pre-vocational programmes preparing for vocational studies, where necessary:

- **Education preparing for upper secondary VET (20–40 credits)**
The education is directed at young people without a clear idea of their career choice or without sufficient capabilities to apply for or cope with vocational studies.
- **Preparatory and rehabilitative instruction and guidance for the disabled (20–120 credits)**
This programme allows disabled students to develop their competencies, to acquire capabilities required in vocational training, at work and to live independently, and to clarify their future plans. For the detailed description, see pages 22–23.
- **Pre-vocational preparatory education for immigrants (20–40 credits)**
The education is intended for immigrants and people of immigrant origin who already have basic proficiency in the language of instruction. Its objective is to provide immigrants with capabilities to move on to programmes leading to upper secondary vocational qualifications by improving their basic proficiency in the language of instruction (Finnish or Swedish) and other skills required for vocational studies. A further objective is to increase their knowledge of the Finnish learning and working culture.
- **Home economics course (20 credits)**
The course provides students with capabilities and practical skills required to manage their everyday lives and households.

UPPER SECONDARY VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Upper secondary vocational education and training provides students with all-round basic skills needed for employment and further training. There are 52 upper secondary vocational qualifications and 120 study programmes. Students acquire comprehensive basic skills to work in different occupations within their chosen sector, specialising in a particular occupation.

Upper secondary vocational education and training builds on the basic education curriculum. The duration of a vocational qualification is 3 years (120 credits). The duration is up to 40 credits/1 year shorter for those who have completed general upper secondary school education, as they are given credit for some of their studies there.

Upper secondary vocational qualifications comprise vocational modules (90 credits) and modules to supplement vocational skills (20 credits), which may be compulsory or optional, as well as free-choice modules (10 credits).



Vocational modules provide students with vocational skills in their chosen sector and mimic the world of work and they include at least 20 credits of on-the-job learning. Competence is assessed by means of vocational skills demonstrations, which entail performing work assignments relevant to the vocational skills requirements in the most authentic settings possible. Where necessary, other assessment methods are used to supplement vocational skills demonstrations. Skills demonstrations are designed, implemented and assessed in co-operation with representatives of the world of work within the framework of the National Core Curricula.

The modules to supplement vocational skills aim to provide students with the general skills and knowledge needed at work, in further training and as citizens. These can be replaced with studies in general upper secondary schools. Compulsory core subjects include languages, mathematics, physical education, as well as arts and culture. **Free-choice modules** may be vocational subjects, core subjects, or general-interest subjects.

FURTHER AND SPECIALIST VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

To achieve a further vocational qualification, people need to demonstrate they have the skills required of skilled workers in their respective fields. In

2010, there were a total of 187 further vocational qualifications available. To achieve a specialist qualification, people need to demonstrate command of the most demanding work assignments in their field. In 2010, there were a total of 129 specialist qualifications available.

Further and specialist vocational qualifications are always achieved through competence-based tests. Studies are carried out at vocational institutions or in the form of apprenticeship training. The scope of further and specialist qualifications or their constituent modules is not specified.

ELIGIBILITY FOR FURTHER STUDIES


Upper secondary vocational qualifications, as well as further and specialist vocational qualifications, provide general eligibility for higher education. A natural progression for those who have completed a vocational qualification at upper secondary level is to continue their studies in a university of applied sciences. This is the case with under a third of new entrants in universities of applied sciences have already completed such a qualification. At present, entrants to traditional universities mainly come from general upper secondary schools, but it is also possible to get into a traditional university through vocational upper secondary schools.

COMPETENCE-BASED QUALIFICATIONS

In Finland, vocational education and training for adults is very much based on the system of competence-based qualifications. This system makes it possible to recognise an individual's competencies regardless of how they have acquired them: at work, at school or in

some other way. To acquire a competence-based qualification, candidates need to demonstrate their vocational skills in competence tests. The criteria for each qualification is determined in the Qualification Requirements. Competence tests are usually arranged in authentic production and service situations in the world of work. Each candidate aiming at a competence-based qualification progresses according to his or her own individual study plan. Qualifications are generally completed one module at a time.

Candidates for competence tests often participate in preparatory training for competence-based qualifications, which enables them to obtain the necessary vocational skills.



Did you know that the international dimension is an integral part of VET curricula in Finland and that international periods can be integrated into the individual study plans of VET students.

International learning pathways with ECVET

THE EUROPEAN CREDIT SYSTEM for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) aims to give people greater control over their individual learning experiences and make it more attractive to move between different countries and different learning environments. The system aims to facilitate the validation, recognition and accumulation of work-related skills and knowledge acquired during a stay in another country or in different situations. It should ensure that these experiences contribute to vocational qualifications.

ECVET aims for better compatibility between the different vocational education and training (VET) systems and their qualifications across Europe.

The Finnish vocational education and training (VET) system can, in general, be considered as ECVET friendly. Finnish qualifications are already based on units of learning outcomes. A unit is defined at national level and providers may define sub-units. The providers plan and organise the assessment of units. They are consequently also in charge of validating and recognising learning that takes place abroad. Finally, the Finnish system uses credits to quantify the volume of learning in a unit.

The Finnish VET qualifications are broad, they prepare learners for more than one profession. Furthermore, they enable learners and providers to design individualised learning pathways by allowing the use of different combinations of units. Prior learning must be recognised and validated by law and VET providers have the authority to do this locally.

ECVET SUPPORTS INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY

Since the technical framework for the transfer, recognition and accumulation of individuals' learning outcomes with a view to achieving a qualification is already in place in the Finnish VET system, the Finnish interest in ECVET lies on further development of transnational mobility. Mobility of learners is one of the priorities of Finnish education and training policy, and ECVET is considered a means to improve the recognition of learning outcomes abroad and to evaluate the added value of international mobility. Today, more than 6,000 Finnish students each year have the chance to experience a learning period in a foreign country. This represents about 12% of newly-enrolled Finnish VET students in a year.



What makes international mobility interesting is the fact that learners have the opportunity to learn something they would not have been able to learn at home. The Finnish vocational qualifications allow recognition of learning outcomes achieved abroad even though they were not part of the requirements in Finland. This is because national qualifications include optional and free-choice units. The aim of the system is to help learners create their own pathways to qualifications. ECVET can serve as a tool to make individual learning pathways international since it makes comparison of learning outcomes acquired at home and in other countries easier.

The aim of the FINECVET project, supported by the Finnish National Board of Education, is to pilot the application of ECVET in transnational mobility in the Finnish vocational education and training system. The project has had two previous phases, the first starting already in December 2004. The third phase will end in December 2011. In its final phase, the FINECVET project focuses on process, documentation and quality assurance and will produce a handbook for Finnish VET providers. The handbook will present the process as simply as possible: ECVET before mobility, ECVET during mobility and ECVET after mobility. For each phase there will be a set of simple guidelines, formats and other tools.







FUTURE TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

ECVET will be launched in January 2012, meaning that all vocational qualifications should then be translated using ECVET. In spring 2011, the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture will propose changes to current legislation on vocational training, including proposals for the schedule for implementation of ECVET (information and training to training providers and qualification boards) and how to define the scope of ECVET credits.

The Finnish VET system is also facing some challenges regarding the implementation of ECVET: how to allocate ECVET credits in competence-based qualifications, how to increase mutual trust (assessment and validation), how to develop quality assurance and make ECVET understandable to teachers and learners.

It is important to keep in mind that in ECVET learning outcomes form the core not only in transnational mobility projects but also in cooperation between different stakeholders, including employers.

Further information: http://ec.europa.eu/education/index_en.htm



Did you know that a number of Finnish VET institutions have already tested and further developed ECVET approaches in Leonardo projects in such fields as social and health care, and business and agriculture. Also the FINECVET project has strong links to a number of Leonardo mobility projects.

Attractive vocational education and training

A GROWING NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN FINLAND

are attracted to initial vocational education and training (IVET). In 2009, there were 131,200 VET students, 3% more than in the previous year. The number of students with a vocational qualification has increased continuously over the past few years. In 2008, 42% of youngsters who completed their compulsory basic education went on to study a vocational training course that same year. This percentage has also been increasing since the beginning of the 21st century.

In Finland, the demand for vocational training exceeds the supply: Although training places have been constantly increasing, there are not enough places for all who wish to start in vocational education and training. The number of applicants to VET has increased by 9% between 2008 and 2009. Therefore there is much pressure to create more training places in VET in Finland.

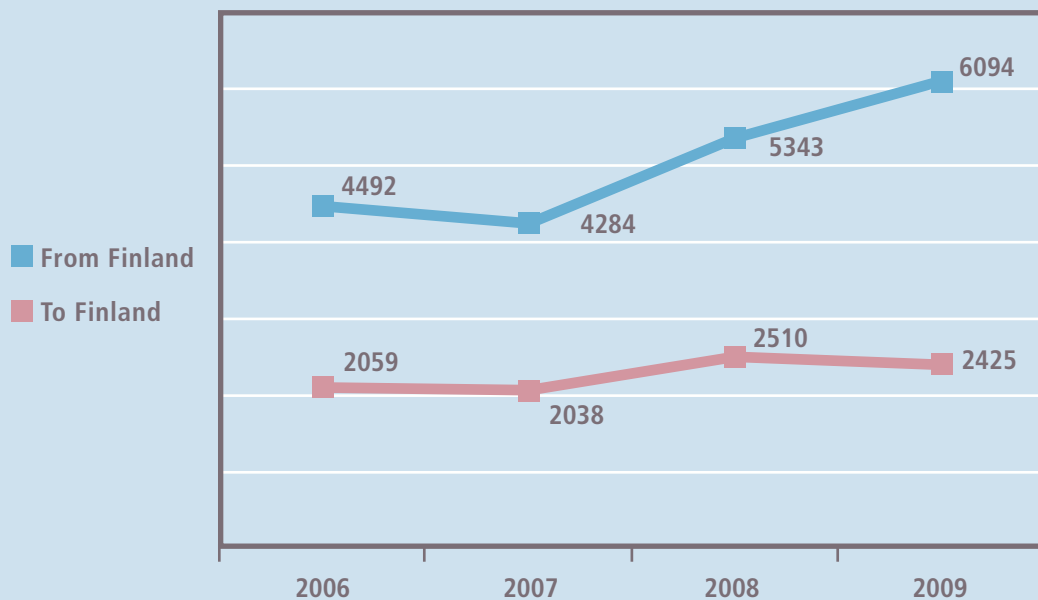
A year after their qualification, 7% of VET students continued in some form of other education and training, 11% of them part-time. This number has decreased slightly between 2005 and 2008. In 2008, 74% of newly qualified VET students were employed.

ACTIVE INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY

CIMO compiles annual statistics on international mobility in Finnish vocational training. International student mobility in Finland is growing, although the growth has not always been constant and the numbers have occasionally dropped. It seems that around 12% of vocational students participated in international mobility when compared to the total number of newly enrolled students.

International mobility within vocational training in Finland is very Europe-centred: in 2008 and 2009, the 10 most popular host countries of outgoing Finnish students were all in Europe. Estonia and Sweden have been the most popular host countries for a long time. Germany and Spain have been taking turns in holding the third and the fourth positions.

The volume of international student mobility within vocational training is high in Finland compared to other European countries. In 2009, 4.6% of all students in VET participated in an international exchange. In many other European countries this number is under 1%. Finland's objective is to increase the annual mobility by 30% during 2007–2012.



Development of international mobility in vocational institutions 2006–2009



Did you know that nearly 30% of the international mobility that took place between 2008–2010 was awarded with the Leonardo da Vinci Mobility Certificate.





Apprenticeships

UNDER THE CURRENT LEGISLATION IN FINLAND apprenticeships are a form of secondary-level vocational education and training. It is an alternative way of obtaining a vocational qualification and provides apprentices with the same access to further education as any other trainee. Today there are over 300 qualifications available. In the late 1900s apprenticeships almost withered away, but during the last 20 years there has been a drive to develop apprenticeships in Finland. As a result, the number of apprentices has risen from the low of a few thousand in the 1980s to over 68,000 in 2008.

Apprenticeships are financed by the state. The annual subsidy paid to the organiser for one apprentice is calculated from the average cost of vocational training in Finland. At the moment, the state subsidy for an apprentice pursuing an initial vocational qualification is 63 percent of this average cost, and this is used to procure training from a vocational school, compensate the employer for training, and cover the costs of student welfare benefits if needed. In the case of advanced vocational qualifications the state subsidy is lower although the amount can vary from year to year at the discretion of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The organisers of apprenticeship training are municipalities, federations of municipalities and registered associations or foundations (i.e. individual schools and institutes).

SPECIAL FEATURES

In Finland, a newcomer to apprenticeship training will be given a fixed-term employment contract for the duration of the training period. There are, however, many apprentice trainees who are already employed when enrolling in apprenticeship training. In fact, Finnish apprenticeships differ from the traditional European dual system countries in that most apprentices are adults. About 80 percent of the apprentices are over 25 years of age.

Another special feature of Finnish apprenticeships is that private entrepreneurs can also participate in apprenticeship training, even though they are self-employed. From the beginning of 2008 civil servants can also do an apprenticeship.

As a rule of thumb, 80 percent of all apprenticeship training is done in the work place. The employer must be able to offer appropriate and sufficiently diverse training, and to appoint a qualified or sufficiently experienced person as a tutor to the apprentice. Moreover, apprentices must be paid according to the relevant collective labour agreement in force in the industry concerned.

Each apprentice must have an individual study programme which sets up guidelines for training, both in the work place and in the vocational institute. All the previous learning, skills and knowledge of the apprentice are credited in the study programme. At the end of the training, apprentices typically demonstrate their skills in practice in a competence test in order to obtain a competence-based qualification. The demonstration of skills plan as well as an outline of the individual study programme must be attached to the apprenticeship contract.

CURRENT TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

Apprenticeships are work conducive, which is one of the reasons why higher education institutions have developed apprenticeship-type education for the further training of adults. The Ministry of Employment and the Economy has also started its own apprenticeship courses as a form of employment training.

The major challenges we are facing today within apprenticeships are ensuring the total quality of the training, co-operation between employers and school teachers, the recognition and crediting of prior learning leading to better individual training programmes, and cost-effective work-based training. In addition, it is important to encourage the international mobility of apprentices together with other European Union countries.

INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

The international mobility of apprentices has been in the spotlight for some years in Finland and has also been taken up on the initiative of the European Parliament. Compared to the mobility of full-time vocational college students,

the mobility of apprentices has not as yet taken off in Finland. However, apprenticeship training providers in Finland play a very active role in developing training in the field, and they are also keen to develop a more active approach in the internationalisation

of apprenticeship training. For instance, Finnish training providers and the Finnish National Agency for the Lifelong Learning Programme are actively taking part in the initiatives of the European Commission to increase mobility among apprentices. One of these initiatives is a project to create a sustainable network of operators and competent bodies in the area of mobility for apprentices. In spite of this, much work remains to be done to encourage apprentices and especially small enterprises to see the benefits of transnational mobility.



Did you know that apprentices can also go abroad through Leonardo mobility projects during their training.

Training and rehabilitation of special needs students

SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS CAN RECEIVE preparatory training, rehabilitation and counselling as part of their initial vocational training; this does not count towards a qualification. The training is executed according to the core curriculum drawn up by the National Board of Education.

The aim of the preparatory training, rehabilitation and counselling is to equip students who need extra support due to a disability, illness, late development, emotional problems or some other reason, with skills and opportunities that will enable them to complete a vocational training qualification, or to work and live independently. Another aim is to provide a link between compulsory basic education and initial vocational training. The training can also help those who have become disabled or ill in adult life re-train or re-enter employment or training.

The preparatory training, rehabilitation and counselling of disabled students is carried out in cooperation with other institutions involved in their rehabilitation. The goals and content of the training are flexible and they are drawn up according to the individual needs and capabilities of students.

TOWARDS INDIVIDUAL TRAINING AND COUNSELLING

There are two types of preparatory training, rehabilitation and counselling of disabled students, with different aims: The main goal of pre-vocational preparatory training, rehabilitation and counselling is to enable participants to enter vocational training or employment that meets their interests and abilities. The length of the training is 20 to 40 credits (can also be up to 80 credits if required). The main goal of preparatory training, rehabilitation and counselling geared towards work and independent living is to help participants become more independent in different spheres of their lives and prepare them for work. Due to the nature of their disability or illness, it is not normally possible for these students to go into training that leads to a vocational qualification. The scope of the training is 40 to 120 credits.

An individualised study plan must be drawn up for all students, which allows them a lot of individual choice on how to progress in their studies. The plan is drawn up together with the student, carers, teaching and student welfare staff, the relevant authorities from the student's home town, as well as with rehabilitation and support



networks. Depending on the student's phase of life, the network can include actors from the organisation where the student comes from or where he or she is going to. The plan also details the goals, contents, realisation and scope of the training. The progress of students is monitored during training, and the personal goals and support measures can be adapted when needed.



Did you know that the Finnish vocational special needs schools have formed a national network, the purpose of which is to further develop the education through international cooperation, to train staff and send out students on international study and training periods.





Vocational teacher training in Finland

TEACHER TRAINING IN FINLAND is provided by both traditional universities and universities of applied sciences. They both grant the same formal qualification. Teacher training in traditional universities, however, is directed more to those who wish to teach in general education. Teacher training with a vocational emphasis is provided at vocational teacher training institutions operating in conjunction with five universities of applied sciences.

Teaching staff at vocational institutions may include:

- teachers of core subjects
- teachers of vocational subjects
- teachers providing special needs education, and
- guidance counsellors.

The qualification required from core subject teachers, such as teachers of mathematics or languages, is the same in vocational training as in general education. Core subject teachers have a Master's degree with at least 300 ECTS credits, including 60 ECTS credits in pedagogy.

Teachers of vocational subjects are required to have an appropriate Master's degree, a degree from a university of applied sciences or, if there is no such qualification in their field, the highest possible qualification available. In addition, they must complete pedagogical studies of at least 60 ECTS credits and have at least three years of work experience in their field.

Vocational teacher training is based on two basic requirements: a degree and work experience. When applying for teacher training, students should already have work experience in their field.

FLEXIBLE AND INDIVIDUAL TRAINING MODELS

A vocational teacher qualification may be completed in one academic year studying full-time, or in 1 to 3 years in flexible study programmes, including online programmes. The studies comprise basic studies in educational sciences, vocational pedagogy, teaching practice, as well as a thesis or a development project. Students commonly link their studies to developing their own teaching methods and their institutions. Each teacher trainee should have an individual study plan.

The aim of the pedagogical studies is to provide trainee teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary to guide the learning of a diverse range of students. They are also provided with the skills needed for professional development, to keep up with changes in the world of work and in their particular area of expertise.

As qualification requirements have been raised and teachers are required to have a higher education degree, one of the challenges to VET teacher training and policy-making is to ensure that teachers' practical vocational skills are maintained.

FURTHER SPECIALISATION OF VET TEACHERS: SPECIAL NEEDS TEACHER AND GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR TRAINING

Teachers providing special needs education and guidance counselling are first qualified to teach general or vocational subjects and then specialise in special needs education or guidance counselling. The scope of these specialisation study programmes offered by vocational teacher training institutions is 60 ECTS credits.

The aim of the special needs teacher training is to train experts who, in addition to teaching, can supervise the special needs pedagogical work of other teachers and their institution as a whole. In guidance counsellor training, the students familiarise themselves with the underlying social factors involved in student counselling as well as with various counselling methods used both within their own institutions and in other organisations.

Further information:

Description of the Finnish education system in Eurybase

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/eurybase_en.php#finland

VET in Europe, thematic country report, Finland

http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/eu/pub/cedefop/vetreport/2009_CR_FI.pdf

VET Teachers and Trainers in Finland

<http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Julkaisut/2006/liitteet/opm41.pdf?lan>

Did you know that
according to a recent EU study,
after the five biggest EU countries,
Finland is visited the most
by VET teachers, professionals
and experts from other EU
countries.



Guidance and counselling in vocational education and training

THE GOAL OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING AT VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS is to provide individual support to students in their studies, in career planning, and in finding employment.

The objectives and content of student counselling are determined in the national core curriculum approved by the Finnish National Board of Education. According to the core curriculum guidance and counselling should ensure that students:

- receive sufficient information on their education and training, prior to and during their study programme;
- receive information and experience of the world of work, entrepreneurship and different occupations;
- are provided with international contacts, study and work opportunities; and
- receive support in case of personal or study-related problems.

All vocational study programmes include at least 1.5 credits of student counselling. Each education provider decides how they implement this in practice.

ALL STAFF TAKE PART IN GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

The most important principles of guidance and counselling within vocational education and training can be summed up in two points. Firstly, according to the vocational education and training statutes, students have the right to receive training and guidance that is in line with the curriculum. Such guidance services are carried out in a number of ways: provision of information, guidance in both large and small groups, and personal guidance and counselling. This varied approach brings us to the second point: all staff members of a training institution should take part in guidance and counselling. These aims, as well as the guidelines for the arrangement of guidance and counselling, have been clearly defined in the core curricula for the initial vocational qualifications. Furthermore, the local curricula of training institutions should also give more detailed guidelines on how to draw up personal study plans, how to recognise prior learning and how to transfer credits.



CURRENT TRENDS AND CHALLENGES TO GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

Firstly, recognition of prior learning is one of the main trends within VET today. The structures of VET must be more and more flexible in order to answer to the needs of business and industry. The effective use of educational resources, including guidance and counselling, depends on this ability to adapt.

Secondly, vocational education has an international dimension. Vocational qualifications include international study modules, student exchanges, recognition of prior learning in other EU countries and the use of the EU diploma supplement in the certification. Guidance and counselling has to take these into account.

The third challenge is guidance and counselling of adult learners. At the moment, there is a lack of staff with appropriate skills to provide guidance and counselling to adult learners. The teaching staff is not given enough time for guidance and counselling nor to developing these skills. Solutions to these issues are being sought in cooperation with other professionals in the field. In the future, the ability to work together with different guidance and counselling professionals from different fields to provide guidance and counselling services will build a solid foundation for life-long learning. In an ESF project (Opin Ovi), officers from employment offices and guidance and counselling practitioners have developed their services together. In the next phase, the health and social sector will join to the project.



Did you know that Finnish guidance and counselling practitioners participate actively in the Academia exchanges through Leonardo da Vinci programme which has sent them abroad since 2004.





Quality management in vocational education and training

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF THE QUALITY of vocational education and training is a key priority both in Finland and within the European Union. Improvement of quality is also one of the main objectives of the Copenhagen process in VET and the Europe 2020 Strategy.

In Finland, the national quality management system in vocational education and training can be divided into three main elements: national steering of VET, quality management by VET providers and external evaluation of VET. There are two types of quality assurance mechanisms in Finland:

- Normative mechanisms (licensing/accreditation, qualification requirements, skills demonstrations, matriculation examination, financing, self-evaluation, taking part in external evaluations)
- Voluntary mechanisms (quality management recommendation, quality awards etc.)

International policies and mechanisms relating to quality assurance, such as the European Union's Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) in vocational education and training and later the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQARF), play an increasingly significant role in the development of quality management at both national and provider levels.

Legislation governing vocational education and training of young people and adults confers extensive decision-making powers on VET providers in issues concerning VET provision. VET providers have the key role in quality assurance of VET. The providers are free to choose which method of quality management and self-evaluation they use.

NATIONAL STEERING OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AS PART OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT

The aim of the national steering of VET is to set objectives for VET provision and its quality, and to ensure these objectives are achieved.

The Ministry of Education and Culture grants authorisation to provide vocational education and training, decides on the qualification structure, defines qualifications required from teaching staff along with the criteria for funding VET operations and for performance-based funding. In addition to statutes governing operations and financing, the main tools for steering quality management on state level include the government's Development Plan for Education and Research and the State Budget.

The role of the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) in quality assurance is to decide on the Qualification Requirements and the Requirements of Competence-

based Qualifications. FNBE also hosts the Quality Assurance National Reference Point in Finland whose task is to disseminate and promote the EQARF. A part of the FNBE's steering role is also to provide guidance through their development and information services.

The Ministry of Education and Culture and key stakeholder groups are preparing a quality assurance strategy for VET at the moment, which will develop national steering further. The strategy will be ready at the end of 2010.



Examples of Instruments for Quality Management at National Level

Recommendation for VET

The Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE), working in cooperation with VET providers, representatives of business and industry, and students, has drawn up the Quality Management Recommendation for Vocational Education and Training. It is primarily designed to support the work of VET providers. Each provider can decide how to best implement the recommendations in practice. The National Board of Education has developed different tools to support the use of the recommendations in cooperation with VET providers, such as procedures and criteria for peer reviews in IVET and CVET. A lot of training in peer reviews has also been organised and the peer review procedure has been used in ESR projects. Experience on peer review acquired in Leonardo projects has been useful for this work.

The Quality Management Recommendation document is divided into sections on the basis of what are regarded as the characteristics of an excellent organisation. Within each section, in turn, the recommendations are grouped

in accordance with the different phases of the CQAF model: planning, implementation, evaluation and assessment, and feedback and procedures for change. In addition, they take into account special characteristics, key priorities and development targets of vocational education and training, as defined in national strategies.

Quality Award for VET

Quality awards for VET have been offered since 2000 in Finland. The aim of the quality award is to encourage and promote quality management of VET providers and evaluation of training, to find and exchange good practices, and to highlight the role of vocational education and training. Another aim is to raise the profile of VET. The quality award competition has a special theme every year, based on current education policy goals.

To receive the award, VET providers can apply to have an external evaluation made. The external evaluation boards include representatives of all important stakeholders like employers, employees, VET providers, teachers and students. The Ministry of Education and Culture will award 1 to 4 VET providers every year for their systematic and successful work on quality and its results.

Facts on quality management:

According to surveys on quality assurance carried out by the National Board of Education in 2004 and 2009:

- There are big differences in how long different VET providers have been carrying out quality assurance.
- Finland has a long tradition in the use of the EFQM Excellence Model and the Balanced Scorecard (BAC).
- The majority of VET providers use different quality tools at the same time for different purposes.
- In 2009, many VET providers had no experience in the use of peer reviews.
- A number of VET providers have planned to use the European Peer Review at least to some extent in the future to develop the quality of training.
- The use of peer reviews has improved the quality of training and projects of VET providers remarkably.



Did you know that there are no inspections in vocational schools in Finland.

... that the results of several international Leonardo development projects have been incorporated into national quality recommendations, tools and methods in Finland by the National Board of Education.

... that according to a recent study, most VET institutions in Finland draw up internationalisation strategies, which has been a national requirement for some years. The study, however, also highlights that in order to further enhance the quality and impact of the international activities the strategies should still become more concrete and goal-oriented and the evaluation and continual improvement of the activities should be emphasised more.



Excellence in skills – a high priority

THE EXCELLENCE IN SKILLS TRAINING SYSTEM, developed and maintained by Skills Finland, helps maintain vocational expertise in Finland. The training of young professionals is designed and carried out in collaboration with vocational institutions and employers. The training offers a wide range of training elements required to succeed in international skills competitions – EuroSkills, WorldSkills, and Abilympics. The development of the excellence in skills training system has been supported by the European Social Fund. The system helps to maintain Finnish expertise, skilfulness and competences.

The system seeks to create new teaching models, to raise the profile and improve the attractiveness of vocational training, and to improve cooperation between vocational training and business and industry. For the young people in training, the most significant objective is to develop their vocational skills and professional pride and, of course, to excel in the competition!

The national training network consists of dozens of training units: both upper secondary vocational institutions and companies. Qualified trainers and skills managers for each skill category are responsible for guiding the young people towards success in their field.

A THREE-STEP PROCESS

The training is carried out in three steps. First, several motivated, skilled young people are selected for each skill category in the basic training stage. The basic training concentrates on basic vocational skills and is provided in a group. The best candidates are then selected to go on further intensive training. At this stage, the aim is to develop the skills of the participants set as goal for them individually to prepare them for the international skills competitions: WorldSkills, EuroSkills or Abilympics.

At the end of the second stage the competitors for the national team are selected. The aim of this stage is, among other things, to improve the participants' skills, competitive abilities and physical condition. This will make it possible to compete in international skills competitions against other top professionals. During the national

team training phase, the members form a cohesive team, supportive of each other. The training is further intensified to acquire the routines, speed and quality required in the competition. Mental training is a crucial part of the training, especially at the national team - Team Finland - phase. See mental training work book at www.skillsfinland.com/en/skillsfinland-en/publicationsen

The excellence in skills training system is continuously developed in cooperation with vocational institutions and employers e.g. through national and international projects and research.



THE LEONARDO PROGRAMME IN A NUTSHELL

The Leonardo da Vinci programme is part of the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme (2007–2013). Leonardo is open to the entire spectrum of subjects covered by vocational education and training. It supports the transfer of knowledge, innovation and expertise between all key actors in this domain.

Leonardo da Vinci funds a wide-range of actions, notably transnational mobility, European projects focusing on the development or the transfer of innovation and networks. It addresses trainees in initial vocational training, people available on the labour market and professionals in vocational education and training, as well as any organisation active in this field.

The Centre for International Mobility CIMO administers and is responsible for implementing the Leonardo da Vinci programme in Finland.

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Facts about Finland

Finland in Finnish: Suomi
Finland in Swedish: Finland

Independent republic since 1917
Official name: Republic of Finland
Head of State: The President of the Republic is currently Mrs Tarja Halonen, Finland's first female head of state.
– The next presidential elections will be held in 2012.
Parliament: One chamber with 200 members.
– The next parliamentary elections will be held in 2011.
Member of the European Union since 1995.

Official languages

Finnish 91 %
Swedish 5,4 %
In addition, Sami and sign language

Climate

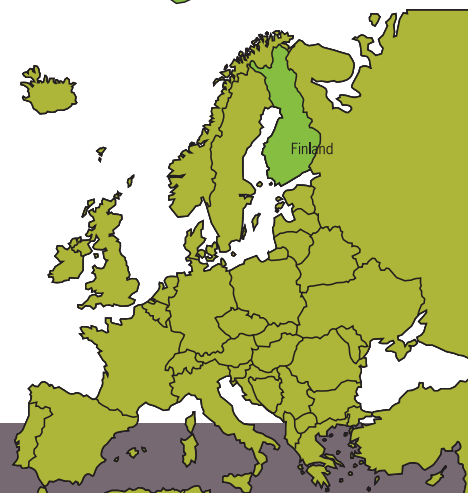
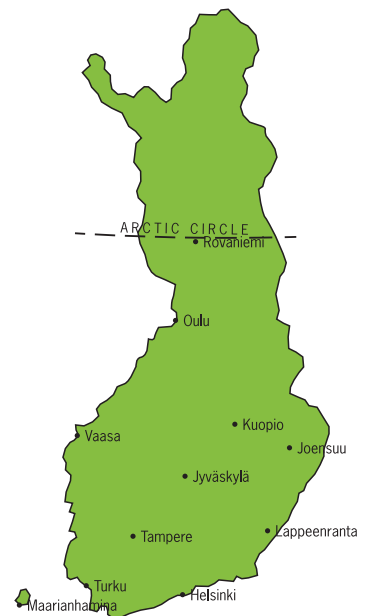
Four distinctive seasons; cold winters and fairly warm summers

GDP

EUR 171bn in 2009, approximately EUR 32,000 per capita

Population

5.4 million
About 155,000 foreign nationals living in Finland (2009)
Capital Helsinki (population 583,000)





Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

CIMO

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